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news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, FRIDAY, MAY 23, 1980

WASHINGTON --- Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Tex., today urged President Carter to sign into law his bill to extend the life of the Great Plains Conservation Program.

The bill, which de la Garza sponsored along with other leading members of the House Agriculture Committee, would keep the program in operation through Sept. 30, 1991. Under existing law, authority for operating the program is scheduled to expire on Dec. 31, 1981.

The House had passed the bill on Feb. 21. The Senate completed passage of the measure Thursday, sending it to the White House for final approval by the President.

"I am urging the President to sign this bill into law, and I believe it will be an important and useful contribution to our conservation effort. By enacting this extension more than a year ahead of the scheduled expiration of the program, we would be able to assure its continuation without any concerns about last-minute efforts to legislate next year. Farmers and ranchers would be able to have confidence that the program will continue," de la Garza said.

The Great Plains Program, which was first adopted in 1956, operates in 469 counties of 10 Great Plains states, including Texas --- in which recurring drought and wind erosion are major conservation problems. Any farmer or rancher in the designated area who wishes to voluntarily participate in the program can do so by first agreeing to draw up and follow a long-term conservation program for his or her land. In return, under contracts with the Agriculture Department which can cover periods of up to 10 years, cooperating landowners become eligible for federal help in paying for approved conservation measures.

De la Garza, who is Vice Chairman of the Agriculture Committee and Chairman of its Subcommittee on Department Investigations, Oversight and Research, said the program has been responsible for important progress in protecting soils in Texas and other Plains states. But much remains to be done, and the program should be continued, he said.

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